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From the Bookshelf

Illuminating History By Tully Nettleton

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The Undeclared War, by William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason. (New York: Harper & Brothers. 963 pp. \$10.)

If anyone supposes that diplomacy is anything less than an arduous occupation, especially in time of rising tides of war, this detailed history of a period of less than two years prior to Pearl Harbor should help remove that impression. It begins with the summer of 1940 and the signing of the Tripartite Pact which aligned Japan with Germany and Italy as the Axis Powers bent on expansion in their respective spheres.

From that point it traces factually and un-theatrically, but nevertheless with absorbing interest, the developments which drove most Americans to support aid for Britain through the destroyers-for-bases deal and the lend-lease program before the United States was at war and which over a period of months impelled the dominant military clique in Japan to plot the attack which turned a European war into World War II.

The book will be of great value to historians, diplomatists, and students of international affairs but it may also answer questions for the layman who lived through those years, reacting to events as they occurred but often mystified as to their origins.

Why, for example, after Hitler had defeated France did he not only delay invading England but also failed to bring off the long-expected attack on Gibraltar with the aid of Franco Spain? This story is a fascinating one, showing how Hitler tried to balance the

overlapping claims of Spain, Vichy France, and Italy until he at length concluded Franco's price was too high and until Franco began to doubt Nazi invincibility.

Is the reader one of those to whom Hitler's attack on Russia came as a complete surprise and who supposes it marked merely a sudden, irrational impulse? Then it is illuminating to find that this plan began to form five months before the event, and shortly after the Führer failed to talk concretely enough to draw Stalin and Molotov in as partners in conquest.

The Japanese purpose to prepare war plans dated only about three months before Pearl Harbor; operational orders were issued a month before, and the task force which was to make the strike had left port when Secretary Hull submitted his final 10-points proposal to Ambassadors Nomura and Kurusu. But this followed months and months of American and Japanese endeavor to bridge the chasm that lay between them as the result of Japan's aggression in China and Indo-China.

The account given will not satisfy those who aver that Churchill and Roosevelt plotted to push Japan into making war. The forces pictured are more massive and impersonal than that. The authors are not uncritical of American diplomacy but from their record it is difficult to see how collision could have been averted by diplomacy alone.

The authors are a professor of history at Harvard and a former associate professor at Amherst, both of whom served in the Office of Strategic Services during the war. It is published for the Council on Foreign Relations, Inc.